

Statement of
Dorothy E. Jones,
Member, Board of State Canvassers
to the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

March 9, 2005

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Dorothy Jones and I am pleased to come before you today as a proud member of the Michigan Board of State Canvassers. I was first appointed to the Board in 1997 by then-Governor John Engler. That appointment was confirmed by the Michigan Senate. In 2001, I was reappointed by Governor Engler and again confirmed by the Senate. Earlier this year I was honored when Governor Granholm asked me to serve a third term. I appreciate the confidence vested in my ability to serve the People of the State of Michigan by Governors Engler and Granholm, and by the Michigan Senate.

In addition to my public service as a member of the Board of State Canvassers, I also served as the Chairperson of the Michigan Women's Commission from 1985 to 1991. Members of the Commission, as you know, are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Michigan Senate. While a member of the Commission, I had the opportunity to serve for one year as the President of the National Association of Commissions for Women. Previously, I've also been a member of the Michigan Task Force on Sexual Harassment and was appointed by Governor Milliken to the Advisory Commission on Substance Abuse Services.

Away from state government, I've been a member of the UAW for nearly 40 years and recently retired from a position with the International Union. This gives me more time for volunteer activities and public service, including my work as a member of the Board of State Canvassers.

I've served as a member of the Board for a few years now, been to many meetings, and heard both sides of a lot of issues, including some times when the same lawyer seems to argue both sides. Despite all that, I'll think you'll find that there are only two qualifications to do the work of a member of the Board:

First, you've got to be a registered voter. I treasure our right to vote. The struggle to achieve it was long and hard fought.

Second, you have to take an oath. It's the same oath that you as Senators take:

"I, Dorothy Jones, do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the constitution of this state, and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of member of the Board of State Canvassers according to the best of my ability."

That's an oath I've sworn to 3 times now, and I take it very seriously. As a member of the Board I never forget my solemn obligation to support our constitution and I believe that I have always tried my best to do my duty to the best of my ability.

I know that you try to do the same thing everyday as State Senators. Some people will come to you and say vote yes and others will say vote no, but you've got to sort it out to the best of your abilities. You're the one that has to make the call and do the right thing according to the law and your best judgment. Then you get the second guessers—the people and the judges who didn't have to make the tough decision. Their hindsight is always 20/20.

It's a lot like that at the Board of State Canvassers. But the Board has specific tasks under the law. To give you one example, it's not the Board's job to decide if a ballot question is constitutional. The Board just decides if requirements for putting the question on the ballot were met. The Board either approves or disapproves the ballot statements prepared by the Bureau of Elections. The Board can conduct investigations or hold hearings on petitions, but it's not the Board's job to determine if something is constitutional or a good idea. That's for the courts and the voters.

Most of the time it's pretty clear to us on the Board of State Canvassers what our job is. We have a lot of 4 to Zero unanimous votes. Seems like most of them. There's some 3 to 1 votes too. Just had one of those earlier this week—and I wasn't the one. Then from time to time the Board hears from people and there's some pretty good arguments on both sides or sometimes none of the lawyers are clear on just what the law is and we end up with a 2 to 2 vote. Seems like almost every 2 years there is some 2 to 2 vote that ends up before a judge or the law somehow changes.

But my experience in over 8 years on the Board of State Canvassers is that even on those 2 to 2 votes, all of the members of the Board believe they are doing the right thing, doing their jobs to the best of their abilities based on the information presented to the Board and the law. After all we are just registered voters that have sworn to do our best to follow the law. And here is how I plan to continue to do my job:

“I, Dorothy Jones, do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the constitution of this state, and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of member of the Board of State Canvassers according to the best of my ability.”